

Restoring Tribal Forests

USDA
Forest Service



*Working together
for healthy forests
and communities*

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The Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes manage over 900,000 acres of forest on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. When 22,000 of those acres burned in the 2000 wildfires, the Tribes ramped up their efforts toward economic development and forest restoration through two innovative ventures: the purchase of a dowel mill to add value to small diameter wood removed in fuels reduction projects, and the development of a native plant nursery to help restore burned areas.



The Tribes' impressive creativity and initiative have not gone unnoticed – they were selected for a 2002 **National Fire Plan Economic Action grant of \$100,000** for the purchase of the dowel mill to add to the existing Flathead Sticker Plant. The Tribes received another **Economic Action grant of \$25,000** in 2003, for a study of potential new markets for dowel products, including teepee furniture, kiosks, gazebos and small recreation furniture, up-scale residential fencing and railing, and even grape stakes for the growing northwest vineyard market.

The Tribes also received a 2003 **Rural Community Assistance grant of \$30,000** for a market assessment of their existing native plant nursery. Built in response to the fires of 2000, the nursery may be one answer to a growing need for native seedlings, due to the upcoming reconstruction of state highway 93, restoration of a Superfund site along the Upper Clark Fork River, and ongoing fire rehabilitation needs throughout the area.

With recent data showing over 40% unemployment among Indians on the reservation, these ventures are not only good for forests, they are increasing badly needed job opportunities. Best of all, the Tribes have emphasized sustainability and ecosystem management in their 2000 Forest Management Plan, forming a strong, stable base for continued employment in the long term. ***In short, the Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes epitomize our motto – “Working Together for Healthy Forests and Communities!”***

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